

Colorado recall elections viewed as gun control litmus test

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(by Greg Campbell, The Daily Caller) – Lawmakers around the country are carefully watching Colorado’s historic recall elections for clues as to whether they can survive passing new gun control laws.

“The whole country is paying attention,” said John Caldera, the president of the libertarian-leaning Independence Institute.

The recalls of **Democratic state senators John Morse** and **Angela Giron** stem from their support for the state’s new gun control laws, one that limits the size of ammunition magazines and one requiring background checks for all gun transfers. [This is Colorado’s first-ever recall election of a state lawmaker.]

The new gun control laws were adopted during a rancorous legislative session during which conservatives say they were steamrolled by the Democratic majority.

[The recall election was initiated by six citizens, who had not previously been involved in politics.] For months, the recall campaigns have drawn big bucks and careful scrutiny from those on both sides of the gun debate from well outside Colorado’s borders.**[click here (<http://gazette.com/interactive-map-who-donated-to-the-colorado-recall-election/article/1505839>) for a map of who donated]*



A major reason, observers say, is because the outcome of the elections could well signal how much leeway – or how little – other state legislators will have in placing their own restrictions on gun ownership.

“Here’s the bottom line,” said Kurt Bardella, president and CEO of Endeavor Strategic Communications, which is consulting with the groups seeking to oust Morse and Giron. “What happens [this] week will have significant implications for the overall debate on gun-control. ... Lawmakers at every level of government see Colorado as a bellwether as to whether they can risk pursuing a more aggressive gun-control agenda.”

Bardella points to news last week that New York City [anti-gun] Mayor Michael Bloomberg donated \$350,000 of his own money to fight the recalls as a sign of how high the stakes are.

“A successful recall in the face of the significant dollars spent by Mayor Bloomberg would represent a crushing personal blow and would raise legitimate questions about his effectiveness and viability in this debate,” Bardella wrote in an email to the Daily Caller News Foundation.

Both sides in the Colorado recalls have made similar references to the wider implications of the recalls than just the fates of two lawmakers. ...

Morse, in the first line of a statement that will be included on his recall ballot, called those trying to oust him “out-of-state billionaires and extremists” who are attempting to influence local elections, particularly the National Rifle Association, which has spent about \$109,000 on advertising and fliers.

The New York Times reported that both sides have spent a total of about \$2 million on the recall elections, most of it in defense of the targeted lawmakers. *[The real numbers, according to Colorado’s gazette.com (<http://gazette.com/interactive-map-who-donated-to-the-colorado-recall-election/article/1505839>), show that groups opposed to recalling the Democratic state Senators raised \$3.1 million while groups pushing for the recall have raised \$266,231.]..*

The recalls have drawn comment in recent days from the Washington Post (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/govbeat/wp/2013/08/28/colorado-recall-becoming-referendum-on-guns/>), the Washington Times (<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/aug/20/caldara-colorados-gun->



Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper has signed into law every measure sent to him by the Democrat-controlled legislature, including the Voter Access and Modernized Elections Act, passed with no Republican votes. (Associated Press)

control-recall/) and the National Review. The latter endorsed (http://nationalreview.com/article/357371/recall-them-editors) the lawmakers' ouster in an editorial because "[b]oth ignored the will of their constituents and pushed for limits on the size of magazines and the extension of background checks to private sales."



Regardless of the outcome, the elections could have wide-ranging effects beyond Colorado, Caldera said. "This has nothing to do with Colorado," he said. "This has everything to do with Bloomberg and expanding into other states."

"Since Michael Bloomberg cannot get his anti-gun policies through at a federal level – because Republicans control the House – the only way he can do it is by making gains in the states. If he could get it to happen in Colorado, then that opens up the entire West."

"He cannot allow either one of these two legislators to be successfully recalled," he said, "because it will send a message to other Western state legislators that this is a policy you don't mess with."

The elections will take place tomorrow, September 10th.

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Questions

NOTE: Read "Background" and view "Resources" below the questions.

1. a) What is a recall election?
b) What is significant about the recall election taking place on September 10?
2. Who initiated the recall election against Senators Morse and Giron?
3. For what reason are citizens attempting to recall Senators Morse and Giron?
4. If successful, what effect would the recall campaign have on the rest of the country? Be specific.
5. How do you view NYC billionaire Mayor Mike Bloomberg's attempts to affect gun laws around the country?

6. Many Americans' viewpoint on guns are affected by whether they live in rural or urban areas and what experiences they have had growing up: learning how to use guns responsibly and/or hunting. Conservatives say the literal text of the Second Amendment gives them a constitutional right to own guns, and that the founders' meaning was clear. Liberals say the founders only meant for government "state militias" to have the right to carry firearms.

- a) Write out the text of the Second Amendment.
- b) What right do you think this gives to citizens?

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Background

Recall Elections:

- Recall elections are an electoral device in American politics which allow citizens to remove an elected official from office before the end of that person's term in office.
- Like initiatives and referendum, recall elections are considered an extension of democracy in that they allow citizens to hold elected officials to account after they have been elected and during their term in office.
- Those who wish to remove an official need to raise a petition with the names of typically 25% of the number of people who voted for that official in the previous election.
- Once the required names have been collected, a special election is held. If the majority of those who vote want that official to be removed, then this takes place.
- Fourteen state constitutions allow for recall elections for elected state officials and many more for locally elected officials.
- Recalls, initiatives and referendums are aspects of direct democracy.

Read more about recall elections at ballotpedia.org
(<http://ballotpedia.org/wiki/index.php/Recall>).

Resources

Read about the six citizens who initiated the recall election against Senators Morse and Giron at: [basicfreedomdefensefund.org](http://www.basicfreedomdefensefund.org)
(<http://www.basicfreedomdefensefund.org/?q=node/26>).

Read about the 54 Sheriffs who brought a lawsuit against Governor Hickenlooper challenging his passage of the restrictive gun laws at: coloradoguncase.org
(<http://coloradoguncase.org/>)

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